

# The Resilience Shuffle

Temporary Migrants and Canadian  
Communities Dance Around the Problem

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# BMRC Study – Resilience & Temporary Migrants in Waterloo Region

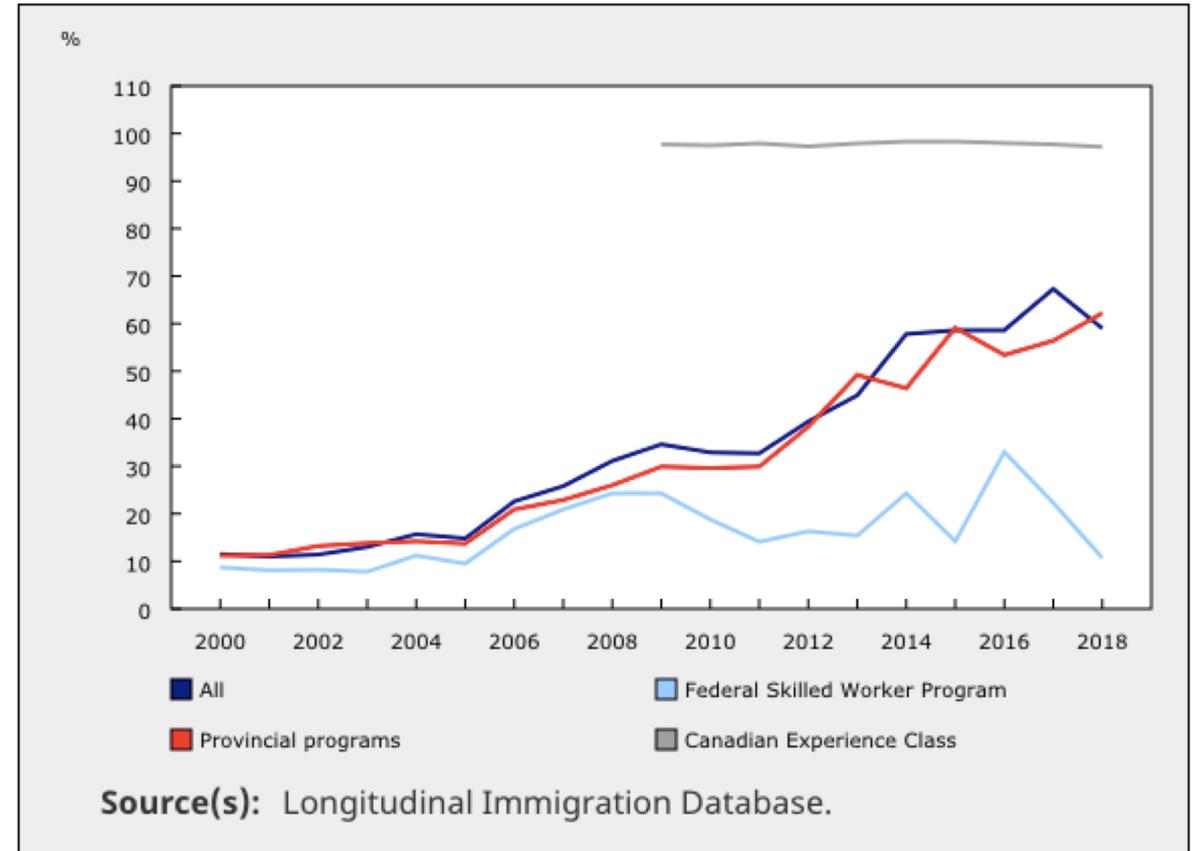
- Examines the relationship between temporary migration status and migrant resilience, based on case study research in the region of Waterloo, Ontario.
- Interviews with 20 service providers and 70 temporary migrants (including international students, refugee claimants, high- and low-skill workers, and non-status individuals).
- Analysis of existing data from Waterloo Region Immigration Profile, Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre organizational data, and other service provider data.



For more information about BMRC projects: <https://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/>

# Two-Step migration on the rise

The share of economic immigrant principal applicants who worked in Canada before immigration, 2000 to 2018 landing cohorts

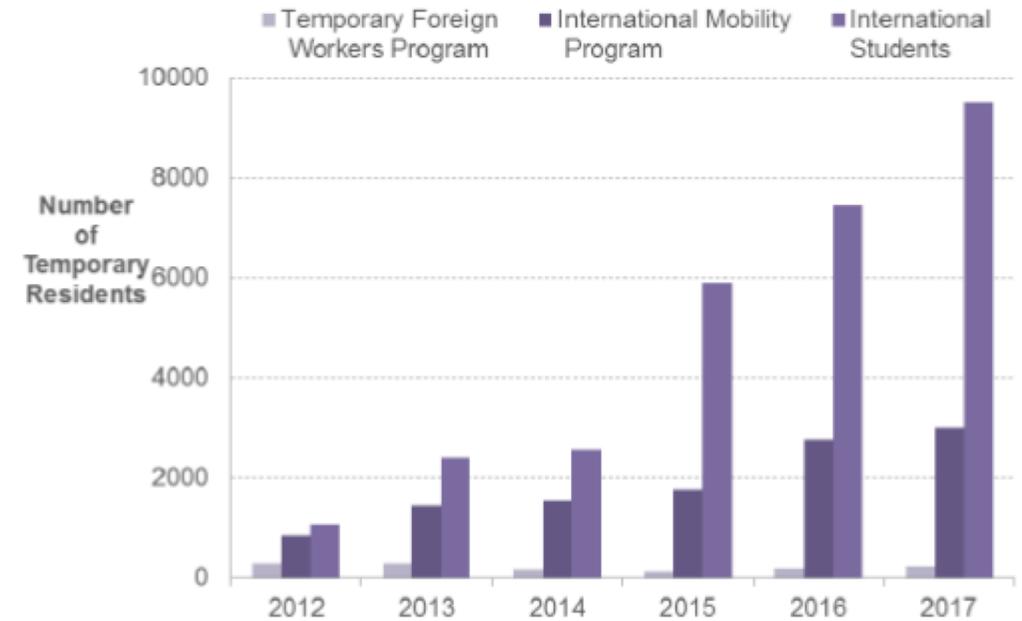


Source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/11-626-X2020010>

Ferrer, Picot and Riddell 2014; Hou and Picot 2016; IRCC 2015, 2017b

# Case Study: Waterloo Region

- The number of individuals receiving a temporary resident permit each year in Waterloo Region has been increasing for the last six years from 2,230 in 2012 to 12,755 in 2017.
- A total of 41,595 temporary resident permits were issued to Waterloo Region temporary residents during the six year period from 2012 to 2017.

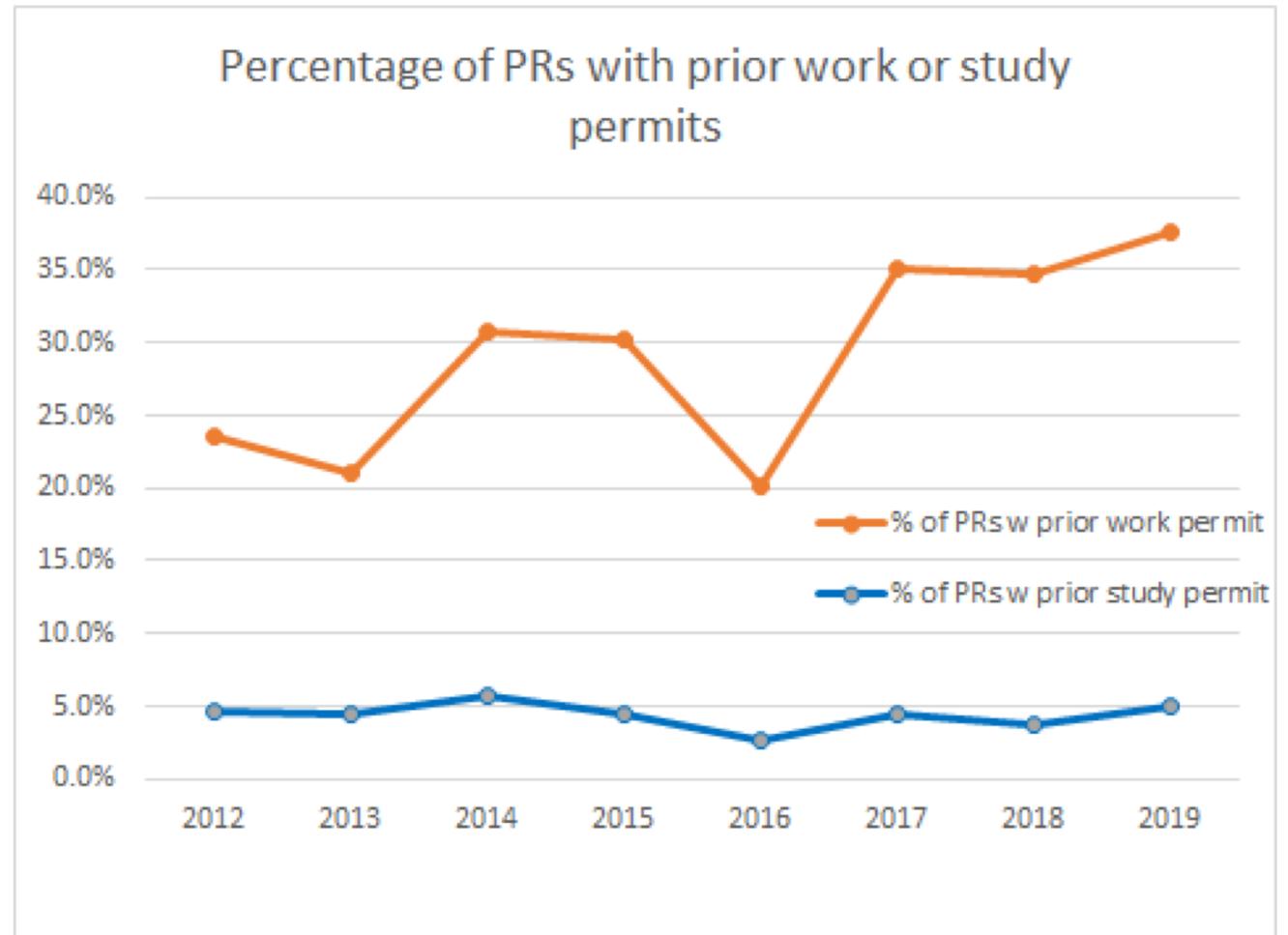


Source: Immigration, Refugees, Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Temporary Residents, 2012-2017  
This data on temporary residents does not include refugee claimants as this information is not available at the municipal level.  
Data represents the year in which the temporary resident permit became effective and does not represent the total number of temporary resident permit holders in Waterloo Region in a given year, many will stay more than one year and some may stay less than one.

# Two-step Migration in Waterloo Region

According to Immigration Partnership 2021 Immigrant Survey (n=1,507):

- Among international students, 68% had been here 1-5 years, and 14% had been here 6 or more years
- Frequently mentioned challenges were: Finding work (51%), Making friends or social connections (44%), Finding affordable housing (38%) and being socially isolated (24%).
- Compared to all Immigrant Survey respondents, IS were more likely to say that they did not use services because they were not aware of the services but if they were they would have used them (46% vs 25%), They were less likely to say that they didn't need them (52% vs 68%)



Source: LIP, Region of Waterloo, 2021

# Challenges facing temporary migrants in Canadian communities

- **Employment** – ineligibility, documentation, insecurity, discrimination
- **Housing and transportation** – ineligibility, insecurity, discrimination, cost
- **Family separation and strain** – families split across borders, visitors and multiple entry visa restrictions, delays in reunification, marital strain
- **Access to PR** – ineligibility, documentation, lack of support/information
- **Access to services** – ineligibility, location/hours, childcare, navigation issues

*“The problem is this renewal process every year would keep me here in Canada trapped ‘cause when your work permit expires you can remain in Canada with what they call implied status, so that means until you get your next work permit. So I missed Christmas, birthdays and important events in my family every single year because the renewal was in November, and the Canadian government was taking, at that time, about three months to reply to work permit applications. I was completely depressed and doing what had to be done, but not more. So it really impacted me a lot. Having this uncertainty influences many aspects of your life. It gives uncertainty to your family members, to your partner.” ~Physicist, post-doctoral fellow, Waterloo Region*

*“When I came here as a visitor or work permit, I don’t have the same offers. The permanent resident people they can go to school, get OSAP... I will say keep helping all the people, not saying those people don’t have permanent [residence] or they came as temporary migrant. Help all the people the same. Because those people are coming here not just to sit or have vacation, they are coming here to do something in their life.” – Open work permit holder living in Waterloo for the last 6 years*

*“Temporary status is a huge barrier. To everything. Let’s say, buying a phone, you have a problem because you don’t have credit. Getting an apartment.” ~ Visitor to refugee claimant from Kosovo, Waterloo Region*

*“I couldn't write the other exams I need to be able to practice as a physician I have to write the NTC exam. So I just wrote the first one, but the Q one, the Q2 the OSK? I can't write it. I need a passport, and my passport has expired. It's like I stand still. I’m not moving forward, I'm not moving backward, I’m just there. It's so frustrating...I want to register myself for swimming. I want to do things, but you know I can't really plan. I don't know when my time is coming, or what will be the outcome. So I can't really make any long term plan or commitment. When I was looking for car on Kijiji, they said, ‘Oh why can't you go for financing?’ I said, ‘Which financing? I don't know, I don't know about tomorrow.’ ~ Physician from Nigeria, asylum claimant, Kitchener*

*“In order to reduce racism, say, in the workplace, no one should be discriminated or prevented from getting a job because of their citizenship status. No one should be discriminated or prevented from getting a job because of their citizenship status. And yet it’s embedded within the culture. Even the structure itself.”*

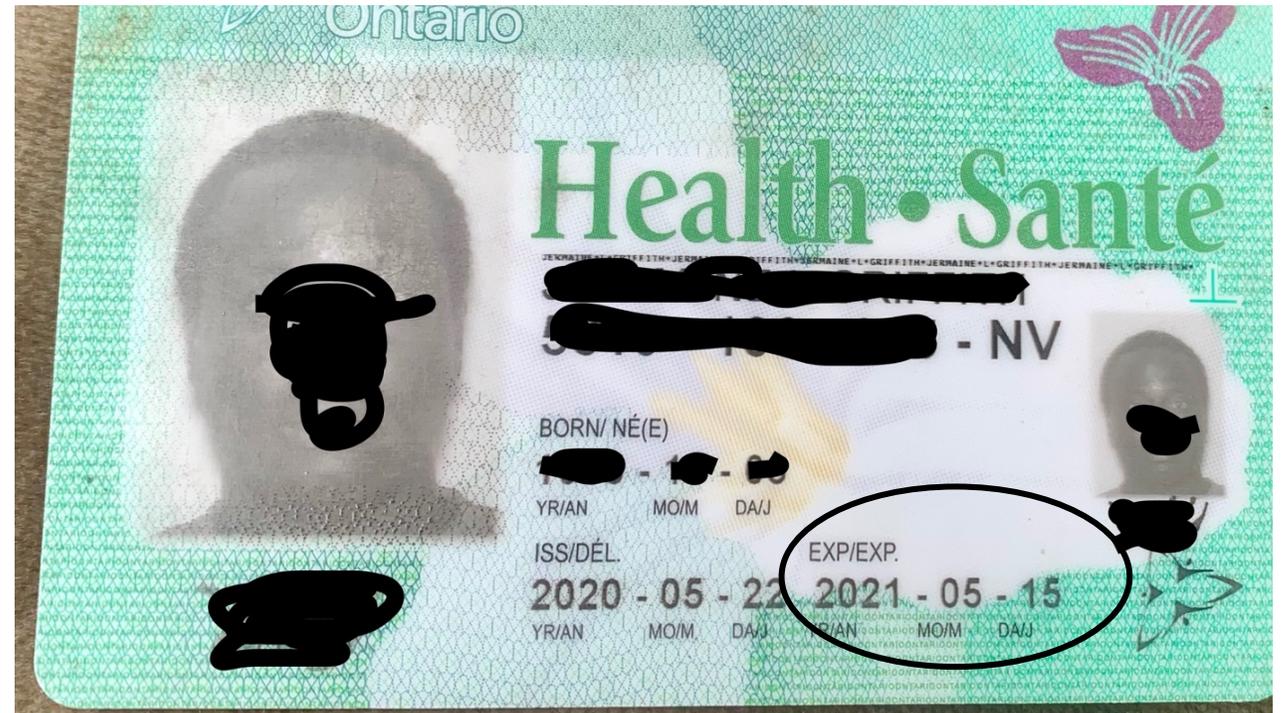
*~ Recent PHD graduate from Malawi, Temporary Migrant, Waterloo Region*

*“When I ask them [community centre outreach worker] for helping with anything, they said, ‘We can’t help the people who are not permanent resident.’ If I need any support with programs or camps, I found the answer no, we can’t support you because you are not permanent resident. Also for the clothes or bikes or any program for kids like arts program in the community the first place is just for the immigration or permanent resident people, not for [people] like us. ...If I go back five years ago, I would not decide to come as a visitor or work permit. I would not come here without permanent resident or something to support. Because, we can’t do anything like a permanent [resident can do]. It’s very hard, very, very hard.*

*~ Science teacher from Libya, Temporary migrant, Waterloo Region*

# Service gaps

- Health services
- Language, training services
- Employment services
- Legal services
- Immigration services



*“My student visa expired, my work permit expired, my health card expired. I was waiting for immigration to renew and I prayed the baby wouldn’t come.” ~ Work permit holder, Waterloo Region*

*“Many of the families that we talk to don’t have a regular family doctor, have a really hard time finding one, so they’ll just go to walk-in clinics every time.” ~ Social worker, north Waterloo*

*The first time when I apply for work the first question was are you permanent resident. When I say no they say you can't apply for this job. Also one time I tried to do the resumé so I made one, it was a lady, so she asked me, "Why you're going to do the resumé?" I said, "Because I want to apply for a job." But her answer was, "Do you have permanent residence?" I said, "No." She said, "Okay, I can't help you to do the resumé." She was working at the community helping the people to do the resumé. She didn't help me in that time, but when I tried to go someone told me to go to the YMCA, they can help you to do it. They helped me. So I didn't know what is different, why she said that and why the YMCA helped me with the resumé, and then I got job.*

*~Chemist from Libya, Visitor – to open work permit, Waterloo Region*

*I tried several times to apply for permanent residency, but as you know the system is now very complicated. The score is getting very high, not like before. So regarding express entry for example for which [I am] already ineligible to become a permanent resident. When I came here it was - the score was about 415 - 420, and the score now reaches to 465. My age is getting older and every year 5 points are subtracted for this age. So every year my score is getting down, and the score for for express entry is increased so I cannot apply for permanent residency. You just get 15 more points for PhD. I am really so frustrated. I actually cannot guarantee to stay here in Canada unless I become a permanent resident. I cannot change my status until finishing my degree. And I cannot access benefits for my son who is a citizen, not even for daycare, because I have to become a permanent resident to enable myself to take his rights as other citizens. So it is a complicated system.*

*~ PHD student, Waterloo Region*

# Resilience strategies – Individual level



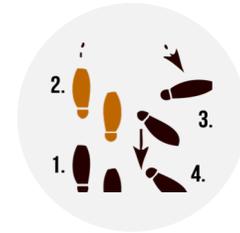
THE SHIFTS



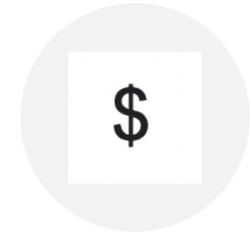
THE SHUFFLE



THE TWO-STEP



THE SIDE-STEP



THE BORROWING  
BOP

*“Finding volunteer opportunities through Facebook. It's a good way to be a part of society, you know? Because we are coming here and there is so many barriers. This is one way to get into society.” ~20-year-old refugee claimant from Kosovo, Waterloo Region*

*“ For me, when I started giving back to the community, working, I had a sense of belonging to this community. Before that I didn't have that sense of belonging. As soon as I started to do something ... of course, I did some volunteer jobs before but as soon as I started to be part of the community, to get and give from the community and then I had the feeling that I'm important, my life is important, I do matter to the community. And then I was a stronger mom and I was able to build ... working, getting involved helped me to build resilience I would say. ~ Iranian international graduate student, Waterloo Region*

*“We did the language test and everything, spent a lot of money but it just went down the drain because I wasn't able to, for example, through the express entry system I didn't have enough points, I couldn't qualify, and then the 18 months' one through the province (PNP), that didn't work out because they changed the system. Then I decided to go to school again. Each time I thought, okay, I have it, I have it in hand, and then they'll change the regulations. I have to pivot.” ~International student, former work permit and international student, Waterloo Region*

# Resilience strategies – Community level

- ✓ Data gathering and analysis
- ✓ Modifying eligibility requirements
- ✓ Combining service groups
- ✓ Creative accounting
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Burden-sharing
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Offloading (private sector, employers, universities & colleges)
- ✓ Advocacy with IRCC

*“Temporary visas is one that we can’t do. I think the logic behind it is that these people are going back. They are here temporarily and they’re going to go back. They’re not going to stay in Canada so the investment should be [in permanent residents] If you check with them, they aren’t planning to stay because their eligibility doesn’t allow them to apply. And majority of them do stay but they struggle.”*

*~ Community Outreach Worker, Waterloo Region*

*We’ve had to be a bit more creative and think outside the box in order to be able to connect people to where they need to be. I think there needs to be a much more concerted effort. The fact is that there is no one place for employers to go to hire immigrants or temporary migrants in Waterloo region. We have an immigration partnership which is very well connected to the community. They have a website, but there is no central hub so the employers will call me. I refer them to the immigration partnership.*

*~ Representative from the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin:*

*I didn’t know where to turn so I joined a WhatsApp group of Iranians in southern Ontario. The Iranian woman from WhatsApp that had sent a taxi for us, I had called her and asked if she had any temporary place for us. She was going to help the newcomers, but with money, because it was not free. For renting houses, getting a taxi, for information, they needed money first. It was not even a company. It’s just a person who is an international student, and she is doing stuff like this instead of working. If a newcomer comes and for example needs a taxi from Pearson Airport to Waterloo, she makes the arrangements. And if someone needs a temporary place she helps to arrange it. She even had a basement, but at the time when we were coming to Canada, it was full.*

*~ Meat packing plant worker interested in study permit, Work permit, Waterloo Region*

# Conclusions

1. The increase in complexity and plethora of pathways heightens challenges at both individual and community level (=system level).
2. The growing tendency for the “Temporary Migration Two-Step “ through new two-step pathways to PR has not been matched by a comparable shift in settlement service provision model or funding system.
3. Resilience pressures and strategies (such as “shuffling” should be read as signs that the system is not working.





Thank you

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